

"Inside Hansot"

By "M. Sadique Chohan"

About 400 km to the north of Mumbai & 19 km to the west of Ankleshwar (in Bharuch district of south Gujarat), a small village was once colonized by Jains, which soon grew into a town, & now stands as a taluka in its own right. This ancient town is our most interesting & beloved home-town of Hansot.

People of different races reside in the town, & farming is the main occupation of the majority of the people. The town has all the basic amenities e.g. water, electricity, telephone, madrassahs, Darul Uloom, masjids, schools, library, post office, banks, hospital, dispensaries, medical lab, cotton-ginning factory, irrigation system, cable service, & a bus stand. In total above 50 villages come under the actual jurisdiction of Hansot taluka. Although the town is not that famous on the regional or provincial level, it is still the "mother" to some of the subcontinent's well-known & prominent personalities. Nowadays, people from this dormitory town are found scattered all over the world; as almost one member from each family has migrated abroad for his livelihood.

The question as to when the town actually came into existence is so far unknown to us; but going through the recorded history of Gujarat, some hints are available to infer the probable period during which the town would have come into existence.

According to historians, Gujarat remained under the rule of several "Hindu" kings before the dawn of recorded history. Uncounted rajahs & maharajahs dominated the province for thousands of years & ruled the cities, until the arrival of Muslim kings from the Arabian & central Asian countries. Amongst them, Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi was the first to attack & capture Gujarat in 1025 C.E. During his numerous attacks he had driven the local feudal lords out of the cities, which consequently fled towards the safe havens of the rural areas bordering the cities. After the death of Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi,

his successors & tributary rulers ruled over the province until 1196 C.E., when the Muslim general Qutub-ud-Din Aibak attacked & captured Gujarat, & included it in the Delhi regime of Sultan Muhammed Ghori. Since then Gujarat remained under the rule of the Delhi Empire, & was governed by the Delhi kings' generals." "Although the province was under the rule of the Muslim dominions, because of its distance, it became a center of political activities by the former "Hindu" king's family members. The generals appointed by the Delhi kings only possessed & governed the cities e.g. the capital Ahmedabad, Khambat, Bharuch & Surat; but ignored the peripheral rural areas, where the driven dominions' family members had established their petty kingdoms. It is believed that Rander was one the petty kingdoms of such a driven dominion, as according to the history of Gujarat, the coastal town was dominated by Jains in the 12th century C.E.

The real details about how our town came to be called Hansot, from its former name of Hanseswar, are so far unknown to us. However, by analysis of the 2 names, a name change appears to reveal itself. The 2 separate words of "Hans" & "oat" which signifies the decline of Hansraj as per the dictionaries of the Gujarati language (?). The solid evidence provided by the meaning of Hansot clearly persuades one into believing, that indeed the name would have become Hansot after the ruling period of king Hansraj.

To the north of Hansot, the river Narmada flows westwards across the coastal land (bhata) & merges into the Arabian Sea, near the Gulf of Cambay. The coastal land is spread over the area of 17 miles, ranging from Matiaid to Kanyajal along the riverine coast. To the south Kanta Sion, Raima & Alwa by the Hansot-Surat road, & to the east Utraj & Ashta by the Hansot-Ankleshwar road, while to the west are **Ambheta**, Vansloli, Katpor & Kanyajal by the Arabian sea." "During the period of Mughal rule, the coastal cities of Bharuch & Surat were main seaports of south India; the entire trade from Gujarat & southern India across to the trans-oceanic countries was transmitted through these ports. The port of Bharuch was of particularly great importance, due to its long harbor with the open coastline of Hansot. Also, since the passage of the Gulf of Cambay (Khambat) is very wide, being 20 miles in breadth, a large number of

big vessels from the Arabian countries used to enter through the passage of the river Narmada, for anchorage at Bharuch port. The intense commercial activities exemplified by the exchange of merchandise popularized the port, & Bharuch was famed for the full-swing trade activities in India & abroad. When the British Queen Elizabeth came to know about the heavy trade transactions of Bharuch port, she had at one point addressed the Mughal Emperor Akbar as the king of Bharuch, instead of as the king of Delhi in her letter to him. Because of the intense commercial activity, the port used to remain occupied by a large number of vessels, & the newly arrived vessels had to wait for long periods to find a berth for anchorage at its harbor. Such vessels were diverted by the port authority towards the open coastline of Hansot. Hence the traded goods between southern India & the overseas countries were also traded through the Hansoti coast. The Jain, Brahmin & Vanik (Banya) residents of Hansot were actively engaged in the professions of businessmen, bankers & brokers.

According to history, the Mughal Emperor Humayun was the ruler of the Delhi Empire from C.E. 1530 - 1556, & the cities of Bharuch, Surat, and Navsari & Patten were under his possession. He had appointed a Maratha Subaidar to govern these cities, & Hadhrat Zahiruddin Shaheed (R.A.) was the Mansabdar (i.e. ranked army officer) who was posted in Hansot, in order to manage the custom duty affairs & protect the people of the town. It was a period when the Portuguese sailors were active in the Arabian Sea, as the sea route to India was then newly invented by the famous Portuguese voyager Vasco de Gama in C.E. 1498. He reached Calicut port with the help of an Arabian sailor called Malam Ahmed Kanga, who was returning from Africa where he had sailed with some Banyas of Khambat. The Portuguese had arrived with the intention of invading India, as they had heard much about the economic & commercial affairs of the country. "

"They continued to make attempts to enter India via the Gujarati ports, but these were foiled by the Muslim Kings of Gujarat. The Portuguese sailors then fled to the open seas, & remained there till they noticed the Arabian sea-vessels, who were transporting valuable commercial merchandise between India & the Arabian lands. The

Portuguese became pirates & commenced to rob the vessels of the Arabian merchants. The looted goods worth crores of rupees lured them to seize sea-power from the Arabian sailors, hence they continued to attack & rob the Arabian vessels in order to create panic amongst the Arabian sailors, & to deter them from trading goods with India. The pirates also began to attack the coastal villages, & they once attacked the village of Maghdallah near Surat, where the entire Habshi (African Muslim) residents were victims of a genocide. After this incident, a Portuguese pirate called Dom de Lama attacked Hansot in C.E. 1545, & robbed the rich businessmen of the town. He also massacred many people & disgraced the beautiful women, he then continued to burn Hansot to ashes! The only Muslim Mansabdar, Hadhrat Zahiruddin Shaheed (R.A.) had not enough weapons, & repulsed the pirate single-handed, fighting with a wooden stick as a sword (according to a legend), & embraced Shahadat in order to protect the people of Hansot.

According to a legend, the Maratha Subedar had lodged a complaint about the incident in Hansot to the Mughal Emperor Humayun. The Emperor subsequently ordered the governor of Deccan state to arrange for some Muslims to be sent as security personnel from that region, to provide for the security of the people of Hansot in the Bharuch district. According to some of our senior community elders, about 10 to 11 Muslims from the Deccan region had arrived by sea around C.E. 1565. These Muslims made their entry into Hansot via Aalia Bait, an island close to the shore of Hansot's coast. They were settled on the barren land of the western boundary of the town, & were provided with gifted agricultural lands by the local administration. The Subedar had given them a special task to guard the coastal areas around Hansot, & provide for the safety & security of the people of the town. Amongst these Muslim settlers were Shaikh, Malek, Khawaja, and Pathan, whose lineages were believed to originate from the northwest frontiers of India. According to the genealogical table of one of the Shaikh families of Hansot, they have resided in the town for 13 generations, which helps to determine the period of arrival of their ancestors to Hansot. The maximum period of 3 generations is usually considered 100 years according to which their ancestor would have come from the Deccan region & settled in Hansot about 433 years ago, which results in 1568 C.E. after

deducting 433 years from 2001 C.E. It is close to the 1545 C.E. looting incident of Hansot, thus it seems reasonable to assume that the Muslim settlers of Hansot arrived in the town after the tragic incident of 1545 C.E.

According to the family history of Muslim residents other than the Deccani Muslim settlers, their ancestors had arrived & settled in Hansot after 1616 C.E. They arrived from the villages around Hansot e.g. from Telod, Katpor, Kantlyajal, Kuradra & Kharach, as these villages were caught in the grip of the plague. Amongst these Muslim settlers were probably families of the following lineage i.e. **Syed**, Turki, **Bokhari**, Momin, Mulla, Kanoongo, Majekhas & Shah. It was believed that their family lineages reflect the fact of their origins being of Ghaznavi Muslim preachers, who were sent by Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi after his return from India in around 1030 C.E. in order to preach Islam in this region. The dignity of these Muslim settler's characteristics included, for instance, a warrior's mindset, sincerity, fearlessness, faithfulness, kindliness, serviceable nature, industriousness & a firmly holding onto Islamic beliefs. The aforementioned characteristics can often be seen in the present-day Muslims of Hansot.

These industrious Muslims had the ability to exploit the natural resources from the fertile lands to the regional business environments. The earnings derived from agriculture & commerce in Hansot attracted peoples of different castes, from remote areas such as Kutch-Kathiawad, Sindh, and Rajasthan etc. These peoples came & settled in Hansot around 1660 C.E., & engaged in occupations such as farmers, cattle-merchants, traders & servicemen.

They were inspired by the civilization of Islam, & were impressed by the dignity & preaching of Hadhrat Haji Khaksar Lankapati (R.A.). These people voluntarily accepted the Deen Al-Islam in the late 17th century C.E. at the hand of the "live saint". These Muslim revert soon began to intermingle socially with the earlier Muslim settlers, & gradually associated with them. The burgeoning community of combined Muslim groups gradually led to the genesis of a convivial & pleasant society of Hansoti Muslims.

The now intermingled community members began to borrow words & phrases from each other's languages, allowing for mutual intelligibility & a greater range in expressing their views. This curious hybrid lingua franca contained words from Punjabi, Sindhi, Kutchi, Haiderabadi, Gujarati & Urdu languages. This assorted language is our curious mother tongue, & is known to the world as the Hansoti language. Some other Muslims for example, the Mirza & Baig clans are believed to have arrived from the Delhi region after the freedom uprising of 1857 C.E. & subsequently settled in Hansot."

"Since the mercantile, agriculture & fisheries trades were in full swing, the people of Hansot were less inclined towards education until the end of the C19th (Gregorian). By the time the British government was established across India, it had added much to the nation's roads, railways, bridges & ports.

The transport infrastructure facilitated the speedy transportation of commercial goods. The B.I. shipping company had begun to operate between India & the overseas countries, transporting export goods from port of Bombay. The modernized transport facilities had affected the Arabian Sea vessels, & they had almost stopped operating between India & the Arabian countries.

Thus, the commercial activities of the regions of Bharuch & Surat had virtually disappeared. The people of this region were badly affected due to the loss of income arising from business activities, as the Arabian Sea vessels stopped sailing betwixt Bharuch, Surat & the Arabian nations.

The people of Hansot were now solely dependent upon agricultural earnings, & they used to sometimes suffer terribly due to the shortage of seasonal rainfall & droughts in the region. The loss of income arising from business & agriculture, placed the Hansoti people through many crises, & they began to mortgage their lands in order to meet their daily requirements.

Because of the absence of education, the people of the town were in the darkness of illiteracy, & the sorrows resulting from lack of

education was prevalent amongst them. The British government had finally established primary & middle schools in the town at the beginning of the C20th (Gregorian), but the people still needed secondary schools.

The "Hindu" society of the town had managed to establish the V.V.S. High school at the beginning of the C20th (Gregorian). It was soon replaced by a larger school called "L.C. Seth High School", through the efforts of a well-known retired judge & donor called Mr. Laloo bhai Chagan bhai Seth. It was extremely rare for Muslim students to obtain admission into the L.C. Seth High school. The situation was agonizing for the Muslim society as they collectively worried for their children's' futures.

The Muslims were in a helpless situation, hoping that someone would come forward to establish a high school for their children. At long last, a few prosperous & literate persons came to the fore, who had a firm resolve to establish a high school for the Muslim students. Amongst the few was Shaikh Mustafa Gulab, who was foremost in deciding to undertake the difficult task of collecting funds for the construction of the school building. He wandered for months visiting many cities, & went from pillar to post, knocking on the doors of generous donors, & finally succeeding in his fund-raising mission.

The Anglo-Urdu High School was finally established by his untiring & concerted efforts in 1942 C.E. He had also established a hostel in the town in order to help the Muslim students of remote areas. "The hundreds of Muslim students who had originated from various remote areas were provided with cheaply priced food & low-cost lodgings. Some of these aged fellows are still alive, & to this day remember the delicious kurry-khichri cooked by the mess in-charge, the late Khairan khala.

Since the education standard of the Anglo-Urdu High School was considerable & of a high quality, it together with the provision of a low-cost hostel facility, attracted a large number of Muslim students from across India. The students who came from U.P., Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and abroad, sought out tiny Hansot's modern education system taught in an ideal educational institution.

The entire credit goes to the efficient management committee, headed by Mr. M.G. Shaikh & the skilled professional teachers of the school. They established the academic reputation, & that was at once popularized amongst the masses. They also brought educational awareness to the Muslims, & encouraged them to provide modern education to their children in order to achieve a brighter future. The teachers were: Mr. Rajan, Mr. Mani, Mr. Kidwai, Mr. Topi wala, Mr. Rehman Azmi, Mr. R.M. Shaikh, Mr. A.Majid Khawja, Mr. Abdullah Bala, Mr Usman Ghani Shaikh, Mr Mohammed Hamad Circle, Mr A.Rahim Chacha, Mr. A.Majid Shaikh, Mr. Muhammed Qayam, Mr. C.K. Qazi, Mr. Syed Ali Imam, Mr. A.Ghani RajWala, Mr. Solomon, Mr. Josseph, Mr. A.M. Occadia, Mr. Sadique, Mr. Syed Habib Ullah, Mr. A.R. Khan, Mr. Dhopoly, Mr. Feroz, Mr. Malik & Mr. Shamsuddin.

The school's medium of instruction was English cum Urdu, & the literacy rate of the town's boys was 95%. Above 70% of the school's students used to pass in the annual exams, & the pass mark percentage for the Matric exam was around 50%. Alongside the purely academic education, the school excelled in sports & cultural activities, with the students consistently performing exceedingly well in these fields.

Once, the Chief Minister .of Gujarat, Mr Hitendre Desai, was invited to attend a cultural program arranged by the school. He was overcome with emotion by the role of a poor girl called Sheila, who was played by a teenage student in a stage tragedy play. When the name of the student was announced at the time of the prize distribution ceremony, Mr. Desai expressed his wonderment & surprise that the role of Sheila was played by a boy named Zaheer M. Shaikh.

The extraordinary achievements displayed by the school in the fields of academic education, sports & cultural programs, had led to the town being famed throughout the province. At one time Hansot was known as the "Aligarh of Gujarat" & the "second Kerala of India".

The government was pleased to sanction the release of grants to the school, resulting in the managing committee being in a position to waive the monthly fees for the poor & deserving students of the

school.

The local teachers were as listed; Mr Hamid Master, Mr Baloo Master, Mr Abbas Master, Mr Rashid Master, Mr Karim master, Mr Ghulam Ahmed Maulana Master, Mr Ibrahim master, Mr Ghulam Rasool Mustafa Shaikh, Mr Abdur Rehman Sheikh & Mr Mansukh Sukhadia. They contributed their valued masterly services in order to maintain the educational standards, which had been established earlier by the former teachers of this school.

The way of some of the local teachers was so interesting & impressive, that the students would become totally absorbed in the subjects. The students were not too concerned about revision of the series of lectures, as the manner in which information was imparted led to virtually instant memorization .e.g. when Rashid Master used to describe the important features of the world's main cities, students would feel that they were actually present & that every aspect was being examined in person by them. Another example would be the case with the lectures of the history teacher Mr Abbas Tailor; when he described the wars of Panipat battle fields, the students used to perceive that the battles were being fought before their naked eyes, & that they are watching the brave Afghan & Mughal forces of the King Ahmed Shah Abdali & Baber giving a tough time to their respective opponent's soldiers.

The geographical position of Hansot is that it is situated on the edge of coastal land, being 1km to the south of the River Narmada. The rising high-tide waters of the Arabian Sea entering into the River Narmada, causes the production of delicious sea-food in the ocean-mixed water of the river & its attached creeks. Numerous diverse fish stocks are available from the river & its creeks, amongst which Modar (Palla) & Nevta (a small eel) are a few examples. They are possessed of delightful & uncommon tastes, of which Hansot is famous, with its novelty fishes.

A tiny fragile bird known as the Kul'yhari (Murghabi), being believed to be of Australian origins, is found on the island close to the shore of the Hansoti coast called Aalia Beyt. It is caught in the net traps set by the fishermen, & is sold in the fish market (Santh) of Hansot. The

flesh of this bird is highly flavored, & Hansot is famed in the region for this bird.

The Ponk of Vani (roasted green grains) extracted from the roasted corn cob of Jawar is a speciality of our town. It is enjoyed hot in the winters by the Hansotis, with chopped onions, mixed fried macaronies & fine ground green chillies (Chatni) to add flavor." The locally made sweet called "Penda" prepared from sugar & cardamom seeds added to pure thickened milk, was sold by the late Jata Shankar. Hansot was once famed for this soggy sweet.

The open coastal land ("Bhata") has provided many good playgrounds to the town's children; where kids began to play cricket from their childhoods, & later learnt to play to a good standard whilst they progressed into their age of youth. The town has produced many good cricketers, for which Hansot is famed in the region.

The open coastal land (Bhata) is also a source of earnings to the thousands of people living in the coastal villages. Large quantities of seafood are found in the creeks & artificial fishing farms situated in the Bhata. The plains of Bhata provide feed for the animals, where thousands of cattle graze on fodder throughout the year. The animals' dung & the dried tree branches which are sourced from the bhata are a source of burning fuel-energy to thousands of villagers. The ready harvest cut from the agricultural fields & brought to the Bhata, where farmers thresh the crops in Khalian, in order to obtain grains from the Jawars's corncobs, wheat & beans. A carnival-like atmosphere pervades all around the bhata during the threshing period in the winter season. Consequently, the easily available cheap fodder has encouraged the farmers to develop dairy farms, & this is a welcome source of additional daily income to thousands of villagers.

The shanties of the lower caste "Hindus" are situated in the bhata close to the town, & a large lake known as the "Lalit Sager" is located nearby, providing a convenient source of water to the people & animals. An Idgah exists in order to provide a location to offer Eid prayers in the bhata. According to the community elders of the **Syeds of Ambheta**, the Idgah was constructed due to their ancestors, prior to the arrival of Muslims in Hansot.

Geographically, Hansot is well-placed betwixt the right-angled triangle of coastal lands of the river & the sea, thus the people of the town enjoy good health with a sound physique. The Hansotis are hard-working, intelligent, sincere & cheerful by nature.

The reasons underlying the typical qualities of the Hansotis include the pleasant surrounding environment of the town; which provides them with pollution-free refreshingly dry & gentle breezes, blowing throughout the year from river & sea, across the creeks & luxuriant vegetation of tropical rain? Fields, fresh sweet clean well-water, pure milk & ghee of home-grown buffaloes, riverine seafood in bulk, & grains from personally owned & farmed fields. Because of the high quality of rural life, the average age of people from Hansot (reaches?) is over 60 years.

Along with educational developments, a good awareness of social service is prevailing amongst the people of Hansot. They have established a (cotton) ginning factory, Nagric bank, welfare society & a cuffon (kafn) committee to meet their social & economic requirements. A Dar-u-loom Jamia Mazhar-e-Sa'adat has been established by the concerted efforts of Janab Maulana Mufti Abdullah Patel Saheb with the help of the regional Muslims. About 750 students from the Muslim society of India are seeking religious education, in order to memorize the Quran al-Karim & to become Aalims & Hafiz (Huffaz). They are provided with a free hostel facility by the management, & the entire expenses of the Dar-u-loom is being shared jointly with some generous donors. So far 225 students have completed their courses, & have become Aalim & Hafiz. A grand & beautiful mosque (masjid) with marble fittings has been recently constructed near the Darul Uloom.

To satisfy the spiritual hunger of the people of the town, saints from various countries have come & settled in Hansot. They preached Islam in the region, whilst also providing medical & spiritual services to the distressed, miserable & diseased peoples of the region. They passed away in Hansot & became immortal forever. The people of the region vows? Them with a great belief & respect them because of their spiritual dignity. The people have built a mausoleum over the tombs

of the saints (Dargah). Among the distinguished Sufis, the following saints are the most popular amongst the local people.

Hazrat Zahiruddin Shaheed's (R.A.) mausoleum is located on a hill on the eastern boundary of the town, in the compound of Hansot's police station. The real detail about the saint is not revealed. However, it has been observed by the people of Hansot, that for over four centuries the management of the saint's mazar remained under the family members of Ghelaram Atmaram Seth & Mancharam Davarkadas Seth. They used to raise Gilaf & lay flower sheets on the tomb of the saint annually at the time of the saint's Urs (death anniversary) i.e. on the 16th Rajab of each Hijri calendar year. Hence it is inferred from the traditional beliefs of "Hindu" families, that indeed the saint had sacrificed his life in order to protect the "Hindu" population of Hansot during the raid of the Portuguese pirates in C.E. 1545. "

Thus, it is so that there is a great faith in the dignity of the saint prevailing among the "Hindu" community, & they vow? Him with great respect.

The fishermen of the town shout for the saint's help if they are trapped by tidal waves whilst fishing in the river. On their safe return to the town, they immediately have a bath, go to the Mazar of the saint & lay a flower-sheet on the tomb, then they place a coconut & finally convey their thanks to the saint.

Hazrat Haji Khaksar Lankapati (R.A.) mausoleum (Dargah) is located in the center of the town. According to the religious books, the saint is believed to have arrived from Sri Lanka as a preacher, after having visited some other countries. He arrived in Bombay in C.E. 17th century & was admitted into the Darul Uloom of Bhiwandi, which had been earlier known as Islamabad. He had learned the philosophy of Islam & the Yunani system of medical sciences, & he had neurology & psychology as his specialist subjects. After completing his study, he stayed with Hazrat Badli Shah (R.A.) who gave him the khilafat. Lankapati Bawa was the 18th caliph in a line originating from Hazrat Ghous-ul-Azam Abdul-Qadir Gilani (R.A.). After having

acquired the khilafat, Lankapati Bawa journeyed to Gujarat & finally settled down in Hansot.

During his stay in the town, he had preached Islam among the people & provided medical services to the distressed sick persons of the society. Some of the non-Muslims were impressed by the dignity & preaching of the Sufi saint, & so went on to accepting Islam at his hands. Lankapati Bawa had once treated & cured the ailing sister of Maratha Subaidar Raja Ram who was suffering from a mental disease. His fame as a physician reached the Delhi government, which issued him with a license to practice as a registered medical practitioner.

When the British Queen, Victoria, came to know about his medical services to the people, she gifted him agricultural lands in Sarthan, Telva, **Ambheta** & Kuradra villages. According to the religious history of Gujarat, the saint probably passed away on 26th Rajab 1098/9 of Hijri calendar or 1677/8 A.D., & was laid to rest in his residency (present house of Ahmed Shah).

When Subedar Raja Ram became king of the region, on request from the Khadim Ali Shah, the present mausoleum was built by him & the dead body of the saint was removed from the grave & reburied in the tomb 13 years after his death. The saint had written a copy of the Quran-Sharif by his own hand, which is believed to still exist in **Chotu baba's khankah** in Hansot. He has written his details in brief on the last page of the holy Quran.

Hazrat Shah Nasir Ullah's (R.A.) Mazar is located on a high-built verandah in the center of the compound (Takia), measuring 5142 sq. yards, between Pirlalia, Bha(n)twada & Shaikhwada in Hansot. The real details about the saint are not available, but going through various religious books, there is a brief mention of a Sufi saint namely Shah Nasirullah (R.A.) in Surat, who had come from Peshawar to reach Makkah by the sea in the early 18th century (Gregorian?). Since there is no other pre or post-historic information available about the saint, the truth about Hazrat Shah Nasirullah Vali (R.A.) of Hansot is known only to Allah. Hazrat Bibi Turk's (R.A.) Mazar is located in the garden of Hansot.

She was Turkish by origin & a companion of the Mughal Princess Jahan Ara. The fertile Surat district was a freehold estate of Princess Jahan Ara, & the entire annual income through all sources, collected from it was spent upon serving the Hajis by her command. When there was a shortfall in revenues from the Surat region, the (Emperor) King Shah Jahan had compensated her some amount from the income of the Bharuch region.

On the recommendation of the Princess, Hazrat Bibi Turk was posted to Hansot, in order to manage the custom duty affairs of the town's coastal areas. She was sent to Hansot with a small company of Mughal soldiers by the governor Aurangzeb in C.E. 1645. She was settled with the Mughal soldiers on the eastern boundary of the town, which is still known as Mughal Street. An old masjid situated near Mughal Street was established in the 17th century (Gregorian) by Hazrat Bibi Turk (R.A.). The masjid to this day is still known as Mughal Masjid.

She was a religiously learned woman, & well acquainted with knowledge of spiritual remedies. According to the elders of our community, women suffering from incurable diseases were cured through her with spiritual remedies. She died & was buried in the center of the garden near the bus stand of Hansot. The women of the town were impressed by the dignity of the saintly lady, & undertook vows in her name with great belief & faith.

There were no secular courts of law during the period of Mughal rule, but Qazi (Qadhi) courts were functioning in order to provide justice to the people. The Mughal Kings (Emperors) had appointed Qazis (Qadhis) in the cities & towns in order to settle the people's disputes, & to arrange for amenities such as madrassahs, schools & masjids in their respective jurisdictions. When the Qazi Saheb used to pay visits to places around a city or town, a Nayab Qazi (deputy Qadhi) was appointed by him to function in his stead. Once, Mulla Mustafa was appointed as Nayab Qazi in Hansot. The present Qazi Masjid in Hansot was established by him during his tenure, & the duty of Imam was also performed by him. Mulla Mustafa was a physician of Yunani medical sciences & had treated people & animals by utilizing herbal medicines.

Since the dawn of Islam, its bright rays began to glitter in the land of India. The Muslims originating from the Arabian & central Asian countries came to India as traders, sailors, preachers & tourists. They entered India through land & sea, via the Khyber Pass, & the ports of Thatta, Bharhood, Bharuch, Surat & the Malabar Coast.

The vast majority of these Muslims who entered Gujarat did so via the ports of Bharhood & Bharuch. The preachers (Da'ee) from the central Asian countries sent by the Muslim king Sultan Mahmood Ghaznawi are believed to have entered into the regions of Bharuch & Surat via the port of Bhar-Bhood. According to historians, Bhar-Bhood then known as Bar Bood was a natural port, & sea vessels from the Arabian countries used to come & anchor on the coasts of Bharhood with the help of the rising tidewaters of the sea.

The famous voyager Ibn Battuta (Islam's Maghrebi Marco Polo) sailed for China from Ghandhar port, which is close to Bharhood. The Muslim preachers sent by Sultan Mahmood Ghaznawi probably landed here, & radiated over the coastal areas of Hansot & Surat.

Some of them were settled in the villages around Hansot & Surat. During their stay, they preached Islam in the region & also founded some new villages e.g. Katpor, Telod, Qalam, Kharach, Rohid, Sunev Khurd, Sunev Qalla, Aamod (Amod?), Shera, Aasta Sahol, Asrama, Qadrama, Orma, Pervat, Kudadra, Olpar (Olpad?) etc. The names of these villages seem to have been twisted from the original names given in the Persian language by the Ghaznawi preachers, & exist presently in slightly changed forms. An example of such a change is Katpor which was Qutubpur when it was founded by the Ghaznawi preachers in the 12th century (Gregorian). This was mentioned in the documents relating to Katpore masjid, which are written in the Persian language & still exist established by Muslims of Ghaznawi lineage in the early C17th (Gregorian), & it was named as the Ghaznawi Masjid. It was replaced by the Jama Masjid during the period of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in the late C17th (Gregorian). The Jama Masjid was replaced by a new large masjid constructed in 1997-1998(Gregorian), by the managing committee headed by Ghulam Rasool Ismail (Baporia), with the funds provided

by Hansoti Muslims residing in India & abroad. The master plan of the beautiful masjid was drawn up by a Hansoti architect, namely Ghulam Rasool Bala.

The people of Hansot are famous for their daring & vigorous ability, & some of them have experienced dangerous adventures in the past. A few memorable adventures exercised by our community elders are worthwhile to be quoted here for the knowledge of our new generation.

Once a heavily built elephant-keeper of the Maharaja of Baroda had come to tame his escaped elephant from Hansot. The youngsters of the town (Hansot) insisted that the giant man allow them to ride upon the elephant. The giant man proudly threw down a challenge to the boys, & said that whosoever could beat him in a fight will be allowed to ride upon the elephant. Ghani Sindhi accepted the challenge & toppled the giant man onto the ground & raised (arose?) upon his chest within minutes. The wrestler-like man was shocked at the vigor of a Hansoti boy, & fled to Baroda because of the fear of the town's youngsters.

Once, Hushain Sattoo was coming back from the coast of the river Narmada carrying grass in his bull cart. On his way to the town, he noticed a massive tree trunk weighing about 24 monds lying in the creek. He single-handedly pulled out the trunk & dragged it away slowly across the mud, & loaded it onto his cart. Once, Mian Majid, popularly known as "Mian ka Majla", was returning from Surat & carrying groceries in his bull cart. Suddenly one of his bulls collapsed & died near Sahol Bridge. He was a powerful strongly built man, & without getting scared, he released the dead bull from the yoke, attached himself before the cart & dragged the fully-loaded cart up to Hansot. Similarly, Abbas Anjal had pulled & dragged a sand-laden bull cart from Sajod to Hansot, when one of his bulls collapsed whilst coming from Ankleshwar.

Once, Haji Ahmed had conditionally dived continuously for 6 hours in the large pond of Hansot, winning the bet from his friends. Once my father Ghulam Nabi & his cousin A.Rahman (Bapu) swam across the river Narmada against the water current to catch my

grandfather's cattle. The cattle had been swept by floods & trapped on Aalia Bait, an island in the river. Once, Mrs. Fatima Bibi, Mustufa Surti's house was raided by dacoits in Tando Adam, Sindh (Pakistan). She had challenged the armed dacoits & ran after them with an axe in her hand & caught one of the raiders, who subsequently opened fire on her & fled from fear of being caught by the brave lady. Since then her popularity has risen amongst the people of Tando Adam, & she was once elected by them in the local election as a B.D. member, during the period of President Ayub Khan. Hansot is a small town having a population of about 12,000, out of which 40% are Muslim. The people of the town have been awoken to the need for education from the beginning of the C20th (Gregorian), & have availed themselves of the opportunity from the towns' educational institutions. This unfamiliar town has provided renowned doctors, lawyers, engineers, bankers, architects, pharmacists, chartered accountants, teachers, administrative officers, businessmen, and actors to the subcontinent. The list of learned Hansotis is far too long, but a few names excelling amongst them are given below for the knowledge of the globally settled Diasporas communities.

Source "**Inside Hansot**" by "**M. Sadique Chohan**"

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